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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER AND AF/SE NATSIOS  
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY

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SUBJECT: GOVERNOR RICHARDSON MEETS SUDANESE FM AKOL AND  
PRESIDENT BASHIR

Classified By: CDA C. Hume, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: On January 8 New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson had separate meetings with Sudanese Foreign Minister Lam Akol and President Omar al Bashir. Richardson asked for progress on four points: implementation of the UN's three phase plan for peace-keeping in Darfur; a renewed cease-fire to relaunch a peace process with non-signatory rebels; action to reduce gender-based violence; and, improved security for humanitarian operations. In response, Bashir maintained his approval for UN phases one and two, but the specifics of phase two had yet to be presented to the tripartite committee for final review. The phase three hybrid operation could be as large as now planned by the UN, with no restrictions on UN support elements, but with African-only battalions. Any renewed cease-fire and political negotiations would have to take place within the framework of the Darfur Peace Agreement. On gender-based violence there will be a follow up meeting with the Ministry of Justice, and Bashir promised improved security for humanitarian operations. Richardson will meet Bashir again on January 10. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Governor Richardson, accompanied by CDA Hume and three representatives of the Save Darfur Coalition, met first with Foreign Minister Lam Akol. Richardson said he wanted to use his visit to explore several ideas for progress on Darfur. First, he wanted explicit government agreement to implement the UN's heavy support package (phase two) and to approve the UN hybrid operation, potentially including peace-keeping battalions from outside Africa. Second, he wanted to work for a renewed cease-fire and improved security for humanitarian operations. Third, he suggested establishing a contact group, possibly including the UN, AU, U.S., EU, and China, to facilitate and promote a political process. At Richardson's invitation, representatives of the Save Darfur Coalition (Ken Bacon of Refugees International, Michael Bergman of the Center for Middle East Peace, and Amjad Atallah, Strategic Assessments Initiative) elaborated on these ideas.

¶3. (C) Foreign Minister Akol said Sudan's goal was peace and security for its people. The November 16 UN/AU meeting in Addis Ababa represented a breakthrough and a position that the government would maintain. Although the AU and UN were charged with leading political talks, in seven weeks they had done nothing. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) observed a cease-fire, except for the National Redemption Front (NRF), which rejected the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) and a cease-fire. So far the tripartite committee (AU, UN, and Sudan) had no problem with the phase one package, and it had yet to receive the phase two package from the UN. As for phase three, the UN and AU, taking into account the situation

on the ground, would determine the size of the force, perhaps as large as 15-20,000, and the UN could bring in whatever logistics, command and control, medical, transport, engineering or other support elements that were needed. Akol suggested that the Save Darfur Coalition take a more balanced approach to the problems of Darfur.

¶4. (C) Richardson said he would travel to Darfur to push the same ideas with rebels on January 9, and Richardson and Akol will meet again on January 10. Akol said he would like to discuss other problems in the bilateral relationship.

¶5. (C) Richardson, accompanied by CDA Hume and Richardson's Foreign Policy Advisor, Calvin Humphrey, then met President Bashir for just over an hour. Richardson said it was important for Sudan to resolve the problems of Darfur so that it could go on to other more positive issues. He and Bashir then discussed the several proposals.

¶6. (C) Regarding the UN Plan, Richardson noted Sudanese approval for phase one and phase two, subject to review by the tripartite committee. Could Bashir affirm that he would accept a hybrid operation (phase three) as large as the 17,000 troop force proposed by the UN, including some troops from outside Africa and a special effort to include women in the force? Bashir said he had accepted all three phases, although only the first phase had been reviewed by the tripartite committee. According to the conclusions of the Abuja meeting, phase three should be an operation with African forces and an African commander. The UN was to provide technical, financial, and logistic support, but not fighting forces. It would be a hybrid operation, not a hybrid force. As agreed with Special Envoy Natsions, they could wear UN helmets with AU shoulder patches; the

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tripartite committee could decide on the size of the force, perhaps 17,000; and, Sudan welcomed female troops in the force. He described the result as AU plus.

¶7. (C) Next Richardson urged the need for a cease-fire and involving the rebels in a political process. The EU, U.S., China, and perhaps an African country could work with the UN and AU to relaunch talks on security in Darfur and security along the border with Chad. President Bashir said the international community, including the U.S., had worked to achieve the DPA, a solid agreement that was the key element of Sudan's policy. More pressure was needed to get rebels to adhere to the terms of the DPA. But some members of the international community have given non-signatory rebels arms and political support; a negotiation aimed at producing a new agreement would be endless. The international community should avoid the complexity of a new contact group. The answer is to support the DPA and pressure the rebels to adhere to it.

¶8. (C) Richardson asked Bashir to announce a unilateral cease-fire of 90 days, including the end of aerial bombing, as a way to relaunch a political process with the rebels. Bashir said the government wanted to go ahead with the security arrangements contained in the DPA, including the cease-fire, separation of forces, and inclusion of rebel troops in the Sudanese Armed Forces and police. When Bashir asked for the USG to put pressure on the rebel groups, Richardson asked how Bashir would react if the UN and AU convened a meeting with rebels to relaunch the political process. Bashir said Sudan would agree to any meeting that took place within the Abuja framework and took the DPA as its starting point.

¶9. (C) Richardson urged Bashir to take a forward-leaning position to counter the problem of gender-based violence, perhaps working jointly with the United Nations. Bashir said the only solution for Darfur was full peace and security, and that separate programs for separate issues would not work. His goal was security for all, with formation of the

integrated police units specified in the DPA. Despite the many media allegations of rape in Darfur, only 64 cases had been filed; meanwhile the UN was investigating 16 cases of sexual violence involving its own troops in southern Sudan. Bashir insisted that Sudanese authorities were pursuing all cases filed, and he said he would arrange for Richardson to meet with the Ministry of Justice on this issue on January 10.

110. (C) Finally, Richardson urged the need to improve security for humanitarian operations. In response to his specific points, Bashir promised to improve security in Geneina, West Darfur (where the attacks on NGO operations have been carried out by janjaweed militia allied to the government), to offer security for convoys (when requested by NGOs), and to reduce the endless red tape that hampers NGO operations.

111. (C) Bashir agreed to meet again with Richardson, after his visit to Darfur, on January 10. Bashir said he wanted to solve the problem of Darfur, just as he wanted to solve the problems of southern and eastern Sudan, and to move on to other issues. Such issues included economic sanctions, the inclusion of Sudan on the List of State Sponsors of Terrorism, and development programs. In closing, he told Richardson that the massive media problem confronting the development of bilateral relations was caused by "his own people," i.e. the Save Darfur Coalition.

112. (U) Governor Richardson has approved this telegram.  
HUME